CHINESE DITTIES

by

E. T. C. WENNER,
H.B.M. Consul, Foochow (retired),
author of
Descriptive Sociology-Chinese. China of the Chinese,
Myths and Legends of China, etc.

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PREFACE.

The ditties here reprinted appeared in the New China Review for 1921-2. Ditties generally give a valuable insight into local customs, but those included in this pamphlet are intended chiefly for the student of the Chinese language, who, by memorizing them, will find them an aid to its acquisition. It is surprising that so useful and pleasant an exercise should have been so much neglected.

E.T.C.W.

Peking, July, 1922.
Since (about the beginning of the nineteenth century) the folk-lore and folk-songs of various lands have been seriously investigated, and folk-lore has become a science, a vast field of information has been disclosed, the full meaning of which is only now beginning to be generally appreciated. Thinkers now see, what the earlier collectors perceived dimly if at all, that these tales and songs possess a very great value for the elucidation of the social history of mankind. They furnish pictures of the past not otherwise to be seen. They help to keep alive customs and beliefs which, but for embodiment in them, would have died out and so have failed to record their testimony in the sociologist's note-book. They prove the substantial uniformity of the working of the human mind under the same physical conditions all over the earth. The fundamental bases of popular thoughts and beliefs are everywhere the same. The particular development is the work of each particular race.

The particular branch of folk-lore found in China has been partially investigated by some able scholars, but the field is so vast as to be practically inexhaustible. Any small contribution to this gigantic work is therefore heartily to be welcomed. Recently, the excellent idea occurred to the editor of the official gazette of the Government University at Peking to ask the scholars to send to him the popular ditties current in their respective provinces or districts. Since these scholars hail from all parts of China a large and valuable collection was thus obtained. In the belief that they may be instructing and interesting to readers of the New China Review I propose to translate a portion of them, giving the Chinese text, and some notes where elucidation seems necessary. As a recreation from more laborious work it is pleasant to dip into the lighter kinds of Chinese literature, and if knowledge is to be gained at the same time the pleasure is doubly enhanced.
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The view of the man in the street that these tales and songs of the people are meaningless and useless is superficial. He himself will hum a song as he walks along or read a legend or fairy-tale when he goes home, and, though he does not stop to inquire into causes, he does not do these things because they give him pain. But the very fact that he sings the song or reads the tale because it gives him pleasure and not pain shows that it serves some positive purpose in his life. It may be doubted, for instance, if the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs would have had the vogue it has did they give pleasure to those only in whose praise they were sung and not to the singers themselves, either directly or indirectly. Now if a certain quantity of positive pleasure is derived by the Chinese rustic from the lifting of his ditty, of whatever kind it may be, we have but to multiply that quantity by many millions up to four hundred to see that the total sum of pleasure derivable by the Chinese nation from these little songs is by no means a negligible quantity. We may rightly conclude that, taken as a whole, the nation would be a duller nation without them. Should it be replied that pleasure is not, or at least should not be, the sole object of existence, then I would say that, though that is true, I am at one with those philosophers who hold that pleasure is a legitimate object of pursuit, in and for itself. It may be the sad truth that humanity, in its present phase and mood, prefers amusement to instruction, but that does not detract from the value of amusement itself as a factor in human progress. The function of amusement, like that of music, is to stimulate. It is to the mind what alcohol is to the body, and should supplant it in the vital economy. We have only to consider the physical effect of a good joke ("laugh and grow fat") or the difference between the spring in the step of a regiment headed by a band playing an inspiring tune and the comparative dullness of the musicless march, to see that these aesthetic products play a very important part in human existence. As one of the Chinese ditties here translated says, "To sing a song cheers the heart." No one will deny that "Tipperary" and "Gilbert the filbert, the colonel of the knut," and little Renée Mayer's dance and song, "O won't you come with me, boys, to Berlin on the Spree," killed many a German and many a Turk. Anyone who has not tried the effect of perusing his book of favourite passages in prose and verse on those days when drenching rain drowns all hope of outdoor sport, is lacking in one of the links between pleasure and pleasure which he would do well to forge
with as little delay as possible. Dancing, music, poetry, literature, painting, etc.—all the aesthetic products—are not merely so many words, symbols, or actions, but are instruments for the exaltation of life. As stated above, the sum total of the stimulating pleasure added to the Chinese nation by their ditties alone may be a million-fold greater than is usually supposed. The translator therefore renders a larger service than that of merely changing folk-lore and folk-songs from one language into another. He enables those who could not speak to people of other nationalities in their own language or read their books to participate in the exaltation of life which this lore and these songs help to promote.

Naturally, coming from different districts and different types of Chinese people, the ditties here set forth in English dress are themselves of various kinds. Some are instructive, some both instructive and amusing, some merely amusing, some merely interesting. Most are at least as interesting as the “weather rhymes” of Western countries. The right to a hearing of those which are instructive only, or those which are both instructive and amusing, not being questioned, needs no defence. The right to a hearing of those which are only amusing has, I submit, been logically established in the above remarks. Finally, should there be any of my little folk-songs which can rightly be described as neither instructive, nor amusing, nor even interesting, I would still hold a brief for them on the ground that their often subtle phraseology may at least serve to give the student of Chinese excellent practice in translating them into his own language. If a poet, he might also exercise his gift by trying his hand at putting his translation into graceful verse, without damaging the meaning and spirit of the original Chinese text.

Whenever one goes through Nan-ching Pass tears fill the eyes. Buy a broken gravel-pot, and *yao-yao ho-ho* away to Ssüch’uan!
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[This is one of the songs of the boat crews on the Ssū-ch’uan rivers, which are notoriously difficult to navigate. A sigh is to be understood after “eyes.” “Broken gravel-pot” refers to their poor food, prepared in a cheap crock. “Yao-yao ho-ho” is the yodel sung by the men as they haul up the sail.]

Huang-p’o is treacherous, and Hsiao-kan is cunning, but Han-ch’uan is both treacherous and cunning. I fear not your treachery, I fear not your cunning; I fear only my Mien ku-lao.

The old farmers of Hupei say that this song first came into existence after the time of Hung and Yang, of T’ai-p’ing rebellion fame. Huang-p’o, Hsiao-kan, Han-ch’uan, and Mien [-yang] are names of districts in that province. Ku-lao, “ancient-olds,” or grey-beards, is a nickname given to themselves by the natives of that district. 陂 is here read p’o. Huang-p’o is the native place of President Li Yüan-hung.]

The sparrow’s tail is long. When he is married he forgets his mother. The mother is the grass by the road-side. The wife is best after all.

[This song is current in Nan-ch’ang, capital of Kiangsi.]
HEI-LUNG CHIANG is indeed peculiar. There the window paper is pasted outside the windows; when rearing a child they hang him up; and a girl of 17 or 18 smokes a large tobacco-pipe. These customs may not be very strange; but husband and wife wearing one pair of shoes, and when a daughter runs away the mother does not love her [enough to get her back! ]—how say you, is not that strange?

[HEI-LUNG CHIANG is in the cold-winter zone. Owing to the great quantity of snow and rain most of the windows have the paper pasted on the outside and covered with oil. The women all have unbound feet, so there is no difference in the men’s and women’s shoes. Children, when one month old, are hung up in an oblong bamboo cradle attached by a long cord at each end to the ceiling of the house. Whenever the child cries the mother rocks the cradle with her hand. The common saying is, “The work of swinging the cradle is never forgotten, even until death.” 咬 to hold in the mouth. The last 大, here, “generally,” “always.”]

In the province of HEI-LUNG CHIANG there are three precious things, namely, ginseng, sables, and chi-la grass.

[CHI-LA grass is a special product of HEI-LUNG CHIANG. It grows in damp places, and is as soft as silk. As the climate is cold and the roads both stony and muddy, travelling is difficult, and cloth shoes cannot be used, so the inhabitants
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make their shoes of skin or hide and give them the name of *wu-la*, i.e., *chi-la*, the local pronunciation of *wu-la*, ula grass. The *"wu-la"* alone being too hard for the feet, they pound a thick lining of grass inside the shoe, so that even when walking in frost or snow the feet are not cold. The grass itself having no name it takes the name of the shoe.]

不管臭靴子共一天
不交一真靴子

It is better to be in prison for three years than to associate for one day with a frowsy Chi-tzü; it is better to suffer three years’ *pa-lo-tzü* than to be friends with [even] a decent Chi-tzu.

*Pa-lo-tzü* is the place of confinement for criminals. Chu Chi-tzü (臭 here read *chu*) and Chên Chi-tzü are nicknames of the natives of Hei-jung Chiang. The food of the people consists mostly of millet, called by them *chi-tzü*, and the name of the food is given to the people. Pa-lo-tzü closely resembles the Russian *politsija*, so the word may have been borrowed from the Russian language.]

二十七
二十八
二十九
有
有
有

On the 27th, “Don’t be anxious.” On the 28th, “I am making an arrangement.” On the 29th, “I have, I have, I have.” On the 30th, “We do not see each other the whole night. On the 1st day of the New Year, “We salute each other!”

[This is the *patois* of the Chiang-pei rustics. It refers to the distressed state of debtors towards the end of the year, when, *more sínico*, all accounts must be settled. The speaker is the debtor. “Money” is to be understood at the end of the third line.]
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The weather in the fourth month is very severe. The silkworms must be kept warm and the wheat cold. The man who plants small vegetables wishes for rain. The woman who picks mulberry leaves wants fair, dry weather!

[This is current in Chi-hsi, Anhui. Cf. the respective mental attitudes of the corn and turnip growers in the West.]

The brilliant moon has risen; The thief comes to steal some rice. The deaf hear; the dumb cry out; the lame pursue; the blind man identifies the stolen rice!

[This is current in Chi-hsi, Anhui. It might be entitled "The Absolutely Impossible." In Chiang-yin, Kiangsu, it is varied slightly as follows: The moon is very bright. The thief enters the shrine (house) to steal. The deaf hear; the blind see; the lame run; the man with the broken arm catches the thief! Cf. "a rope of lamp-grass and a rod of chaff." Lamp-grass is used in medicine.]
The stalks of the flowers in the well are long. When a boy is only two or three years old and his mother dies, he can live very comfortably with his father. His only fear is that his father will provide him with a step-mother, and three years after the marriage she will give birth to a son whose name will be Mèng Liang. Mèng Liang will eat the solid part of the macaroni, and I shall have only the remaining gravy. When the bowl is in my hand my tears flow. When I take up the chop-sticks I think of my mother. Then in my left hand I take a thousand pieces of mock money, and in my right a bundle of incense sticks, and go to the tomb. The tears from my eyes drop on to my embroidered shoes, and those from my nose on to the branches of the trees....

[This is current in Kao-i, Chihli. Mèng Liang is apparently so christened merely for the sake of the rhyme. The last two lines are best left untranslated.]

The Shansi sparrow flies to Shansi. The loss suffered by the orphan is that in the daytime he cannot get good food to eat and in the night has no warm k'ang to sleep on. What is his pillow? It is a wooden hammer. What is his coverlet? It is a winnowing-fan. (Sounds of snoring.)

[This is also current in Kao-i. The wooden hammer is used for pounding cloth.]
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Strike the belly! Sing the mountain song! Everyone despises me because I have no wife. Because, on this account, my anger is aroused, I marry many; when I have money I marry a beautiful girl; when I have none I marry an ugly one!

[大牌 sc. 肚皮. 拿 sc. 惱. This is current in Kuangchou (Canton), Kuangtung.]

The tuft of grass on the wall is swaying in the wind. Today a guest arrives. What is there ready to eat? There is the carp; but the carp makes a sound of disapproval with its stomach. Why not kill the ox? The ox says: “I am needed for ploughing and harrowing the fields.” Why not kill the horse? The horse says: “I go out to receive the officials and see them off.” Why not kill the sheep? The sheep says “My horns curve gracefully toward the North Star.” Why not kill the dog? The dog says: “I watch and protect the house.” Why not kill the pig? The pig says: “I have nothing to say;” so a sharp knife lets out his life-blood.

[This is current in Anhui and Hupeii. The sheep evidently defends himself on the ground of being ornamental if not useful.]
“Sleep bug! sleep bug! When the sleep bug comes one has no longer control of one’s self. I only hope that my mother-in-law will die soon, so that the small wife [1] may sleep all through the night till dawn. (Bother it! what am I saying?) Sleep bug! sleep bug! When the sleep bug comes one has no longer control of one’s self. I only hope my mother-in-law will live to be a hundred years old, to see that I grow up properly.” (The porridge in the bowl on the hearth is cold. She takes it and eats it). “The porridge is cold as ice; the vegetables are only a few snips; the chopsticks are dirty. (Bother it! what am I saying?) The porridge is hot; the vegetables luscious; and the chopsticks beautifully clean!”

[瞌睡虫 an insect that causes drowsiness.瞌properly瞌]

How brilliantly the moon shines, reflecting itself in the broad lake! The water from the broad lake overflows into the caltrop pond. The perfume of the lotus-blossoms is wafted by the wind.

[Current in Anhui and Hupei.]
sons. They are all serving the emperor in the court. The eldest holds the position of Prime Minister; the second is President of the Board of Rites; the third has been appointed Viceroy of Yunnan, the fourth is President of the Board of Justice; and the fifth, still a junior, has recently passed first at the Palace Examination. Besides these I have a daughter, eighteen years of age, who has been selected to be the emperor’s wife."

[There is some inconsistency as regards the first and fourth sons, since these two posts were one and the same in ancient times 金榜 is perhaps better than 今榜. This and the following seven ditties are current in Anhui and Hupeh.]

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To sing a song cheers the heart. Carrying my load of silks I climb up the high mountain. On the summit are stone terraces, stone benches, stone balustrades. The violet bamboo blossoms are as beautiful as the peonies. One’s father becomes a chuang yüan, one’s son an official.

To sing a song cheers the heart. Carrying my load of silks I climb up the high mountain. The door of the temple on the summit is open. Three students enter it; one burns a stick of incense, the other two kneel to the idols praying that they may become hsü-ts’ai graduates. A hsü-ts’ai has a whip of eighteen joints and rides a horse which holds its head high. Those who study will be promoted step after step.

[挑担 loads swung from each end of a bamboo pole placed across the shoulder. The length of the whip and bearing of the horse are cases of vicarious ostentation.]
With my curly, curly pigtail,  
Tied with red cord,  
I go to the tea-house,  
To buy congee balls.  
The congee balls are all sold—  
My curly, curly pigtail  
Has grown quite straight!  
(This is sung by little girls.)

Tiny, tiny young brother,  
Wearing his red shoes,  
Comes swaggering to school.  
"Teacher, teacher, do not beat me!  
I will go home and take a drink of my mother's milk!"

(This is sung by little boys.)

[Congee balls are eaten on the 15th of the 1st moon. is used by Soochow people for 小. Red shoes are worn by young children. The 鄭 Hupei people call milk 汲.]
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reconcile you two.” “My elder sister,” [I reply] “if that is really so, I will return in my chair to thank you both!”

留得
詺罵的
姑娘不嫁的

留得屋裏
打開城門嫁哥娘

姑娘皮
桂花香

Orange-peel and cassia-scent! The city gate is opened for the bride to go to her husband. But there are many who are not allowed to marry, but merely are left in their apartments to rail; there are many who are not borne away in sedan chairs [to be married], but merely are left in their apartments to gamble.

[This is a complaint put into the mouth of one grieving over the neglect of women’s education in early times. The antiquity of the song is shown by the peculiar rhymes 娘 and 娘; 托 and 牌.]

三尺布攤膏藥
打了新婦好小腳

大也爭小也爭

拿棒來打畜生

公一份婆一份

姑娘小叔合一份

帶得髒髒歸

臘月二十四歸

阿娘喜討新婦

新婦新婦幾時歸

新婦不嫁大鼓

阿娘喜討新婦

揹大姑打大鼓

The great ship sails, the big drum is beaten. The mother rejoices that her son has taken a wife. “Bride! bride! when will you come back?” She returns on the 24th day of the 12th moon, bringing with her some provisions in the shape of cakes and puddings. One-third is given to the father, one-third to the mother, and one-third to the sister and younger brother between them. As the brother and sister quarrel, the parents take a big stick to punish the little beasts. But the blow misses the youngsters and lands on the small foot of the bride! So they get a bandage three feet long and bind it up, after anointing it with unguents.
Every one laughs at me for having as many sisters as the willow tree has scars. Every three or five years one of them is married off. Then the seventh and second sisters return to see their elder brother. The latter, hearing they have returned, shouldered his steelyard and goes to Gold Street [market]. When his wife hears they have returned, after the exchange of salutations, she sends them out a cold cup of tea, a bowl of meat, but dripping with blood, a bowl of fish, but with the scales not removed, and a bowl of vegetables with the roots still on! When the elder brother calls "Sisters!..." his wife stops him with a glance. When he asks them to eat, she gives him a kick. When he asks them to stay the night, she says the bed is small and the coverlet narrow — how on earth can they put them up? When he says there is plenty of straw in the field, she says the straw is wanted to cover the winter pumpkins. When he says the pumpkins are all dead, she says they are just in bloom. So the sisters become angry, take their leave, and never return!

海龙王家三小姐

难的金家嫂嫂好

低呌一声金家嫂

我是你家三小姐带书人

14
The Dragon-king’s third daughter was married into the Gold family. But her husband did not love her and her parents-in-law treated her badly. “My father-in-law made me herd eight hundred sheep during the day, and my mother-in-law made me spin thread—four ounces before cock-crow and half a catty before daybreak! The old sheep did not like the grass on the eastern side, but ate that on the western side, where it was covered with dew. All my ten fingers were lacerated. Fortunately the Gold’s aunt was kind to me, and brought provisions in a handkerchief to the shepherd, calling me in a loud voice ‘Shepherd’ [when at a distance], but [when close at hand] addressing me softly as ‘Mrs. Gold.’ Fortunately the Gold’s aunt was kind to me, and suggested my writing a letter to my father. ‘Whoso will take this letter of grief for me will be rewarded with a broken fan, whoso will take this letter of grief for me will be rewarded with a torn handkerchief to wipe off the dust!’

When the letter reached the Dragon-king’s palace, the king was much surprised and asked the messenger who he was. He replied: “I am the messenger from your third daughter.” The Dragon-king then, as a punishment, caused the Yangtzü River to overflow for seven days and seven nights, drowning the whole Gold family. The husband and parents-in-law were boiled in oil, but the uncle and aunt were sent up to the Western Paradise.

[The predilection of the sheep for the dewy grass is mentioned to indicate the labour imposed on the shepherd of constantly driving them back.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>又怕山水無盡頭</th>
<th>黑夜聽着山水響</th>
<th>白天聽着鵝鴨叫</th>
<th>吃的大米乾飯鮮魚湯</th>
<th>賣娘為窮賣了我</th>
<th>賣賣給個使熱的郎</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>唱著頹黃金鎖</td>
<td>有心跟着山水走</td>
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The golden lock is fastened to the broom. My mother, being poor, sold me. She sold me to be a sailor. My food is rice and fresh fish soup. During the day I listen to the cry of the geese and the ducks; at night I listen to the sound of the rivulets on the hill-sides. I would like to go and follow the course of the rivulets, but fear that they would not lead me to my desired end [i.e., home].
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白鬍子老頭挑雲桶
兩個媳婦取牙踰
老媽媽糊燈籠

二兒子打長工
大兒子做裁縫
火蠟缸亮蓬蓬

The fire-fly’s light is very bright. The eldest son is a tailor, the second a farm labourer. Both their wives take the worms out of teeth. The old mother pastes paper lanterns; the white-bearded old father carries the night-soil tub.

[Toothache is (or was) supposed by the Chinese to be caused by worms in the teeth, the extraction (of the worms) being chiefly done by women. This ditty refers to the necessity of each member of a poor family being obliged to engage in some occupation: "if any will not work neither shall he eat."]

趕狗入蓬壠
第一窮
蒸酒磨豆腐

若要富

In order to become rich one should ferment spirits and make bean-curd. The very poorest are those who drive dogs to the foothills.

[In Mei Hsien, Kuangtung, fermenting spirits and making bean-curd are the most lucrative businesses. Driving dogs to the foothills (lit., grassy hills) refers to the hunting, there chiefly done by poor men, who live by selling the flesh and skin of the prey.]

算來前世無緣
食着摩打罵有

I receive neither food nor clothes, only beatings and cursings. This is because I sinned in a former existence.

[This ditty originated in the alleged notorious ill-treatment of wives in Mei Hsien.]
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A wife by returning to her mother's home injures her own. There will be dust on the rice-bowl lid and the vegetables will be flowery (unfit for food).

[Being detained too long in her mother's home she neglects her own. This and the following four songs are current in Mei Hsien.]

The ox ploughs the field, but the horse eats the grain. The concubine rears a son, but the great mother enjoys his services.

[The "great mother" is the chief (first) wife of his father. When a man has no son he may take a concubine. By the custom of the Mei Hsien district the concubine's son must serve his "great mother" until her death.]

When the orange tree blooms King Wu comes. When the orange tree seeds King Wu dies.

["King Wu" is Sun Hao 孫皓, the last emperor (A.D. 264—80) of the Wu Kingdom. The reference is explained as meaning that he succeeded to the throne in the spring and was deposed in the autumn.]
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Of ten turtle doves nine are owls. The one which is not an owl will be destroyed by thunder and burned by fire. Of ten bearded men nine are rich. The one who is not rich will lie in an eccentric's grave.

[固老 literally, solitary and old; here, by transferred epithet, an eccentric man.]

I plough a poor field and live in a thatched hut. Year after year I patch up the broken parts.

A bony horse draws a shaky car, and men who live on rice-husks work badly.

[Lè T'ing, Chihli, landowners often go out and trade beyond the frontier, leaving their agriculture to be performed by their employees. This is a hint to the landowners that they should not treat the labourers harshly. By giving them bad food they will only get bad work in return.]

[We eat] cod in the spring, roach in the autumn, and "white-eye" at the rice harvest.

[Lè T'ing is a seaside fishing town. The fish named are at their best in the three seasons mentioned. "White-eye," a colloquialism, perhaps refers to the sturgeon. It is other-
wise stated to be the 'silver fish', whitebait, or the yellow, _Acipenser manchuricus_, Basil. Though the song is current in parts of this province, the Pekingese fishmongers cannot identify the fish.

If one does not shave off the queue one cannot mix with the people; if one shaves it off one fears Chang Hsüen.

[This is a modern song which has come into being since Chang Hsüen's futile attempt to restore the monarchy in 1917. 動 for 動; 別 has here the rhyme value of 雞.]

By the time one's summer clothes are made ice has formed on the water; by the time one's winter clothes are made the leaves of the willow are green.

[This song, commonly heard in Peking, refers to the time wasted by slothful workers.]

He goes to market, and I do so too, but he rides a horse, and I a donkey. When I look back I see following me a man drawing a cart. [Now I know that] I am not good enough to be compared with the former, but too good to be compared with the latter.

[Current in Ku-an, Chihli.]
A little boy sits on the door-step weeping because he has no wife. "Why do you want a wife?" [they ask him.] "A wife would make shoes and socks for me," [he replies] "wait on me and talk to me."

[This is a common song of the little boys of Chiang-pei.

When there is a huai tree between two willows old Yüan will come; when there is one willow between two huai's the empress will go.

[This song belongs to the second and third years of the emperor Hsüan T'ung of the late Ch'ing dynasty. During that time huai (Sophora Japonica) and willow trees were planted alternately by the road-sides. Yüan is Yüan Shih-k'ai, the first President of the Republic.]

The present cannot be considered the worst time. To two fours add one five. When red lanterns illuminate the whole sky, that will be the worst time.

[This song was made after the "Boxer year" (1900). "Two fours" are the Eight Banners of the Manchu régime. "One five" is the five-coloured flag of the Republic, in which each of the five nations under the Chinese Government is represented by a coloured stripe. "Red lanterns" are a sign of revolution.]
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霍啦啦啦啦

小妮來打籠篳

箏絹布娘紡花

月奶奶黃吧吧

When the moon goddess begins to shed her light father
sews cloth and mother reels thread, and the girl comes and
spins lung-fu. She spins two or three pieces to the sound
holalala, holalala.

[Lung-fu in olden times was the rush tube put on the
shuttle before drawing the thread through with the teeth.
Holalala, or kwarara, is the sound made by the shuttle as
it spins round. 三 here has the sound 沙. 妮 may be either
a relative or non-relative. This ditty comes from Wei-hui,
Honan.]

打濕花鞋

水又深

要水高

柴又燒

要柴燒

接媳嫂

嫂心不平

接媳嫂

嫂心不平

親家姐

織的牡丹花

惟有三姐

會織花

親家姐的

織的牡丹花

對門對戶

打親家

竹班

栲竹

竹班

撈竹

Mottled bamboo! bitter bamboo! He contracts a marriage
with his neighbour whose house is opposite to his own.
The son of his neighbour can ride and his daughter can emboider.
His eldest daughter embroiders designs of ling-chih grass; the
second embroiders figures of peonies; but the third cannot
emboider at all. But she can spin on the spinning-wheel.
In one day she spins twelve catties and gives it to her elder
brother to make a handkerchief. In one day she spins twelve
strips and gives it to her elder brother so that he may marry
a wife. But her new sister-in-law is narrow-minded. As soon
as she is married she goes up the high mountains covered
with bitter bamboos. She wants to get fuel to burn, but it is in
high (unattainable) places. She wants water to drink, but
the well is very deep. Wetting her apron does not matter,
but wetting her embroidered shoes involves the work of a
myriad needles (infinite amount of labour).

[Youngsters of three and upwards in Ch'eng-tu,
Ssuč'uan, sing this song. Ling-chih, the plant of longevity,
a species of agaric.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

The moon shines brightly over all. I take my umbrella and go to visit my [future] father-in-law. Father- and mother-in-law are not at home. I lift the door-screen and catch sight of her [my future bride]. Her face in its fresh ruddiness rivals the peachflower. Her tiny “golden lilies” [feet] are so small that a touch would make her fall. If next year’s harvest is good, I will take her to my home in an embroidered sedan-chair.

[Current in Fêng-ch’êng Hsien, Kiangsi.]

My infant is at my breast. His father is away dunning a creditor, and does not come back. But our house stands far back, and our dog is fierce; so no disreputable person will dare to approach.

[Current in Hsi-an, Shensi. 歪 is a colloquialism for 兇.]

22
CHINESE DITTIES.

A man in luck is fat and white. When he goes to another's home they describe him as a guest.

"Lend me fifty cash," he says.
"Here are a hundred," they reply.
"I will repay you next month," he says.
"Very good, very good," they reply.

A man down in his luck is thin and black. When he goes to another's house, they describe him as a thief.

"Lend me fifty cash," he says.
"We don't possess a single one," they reply.
"I will repay you next month," he says.
"Nonsense, nonsense," they reply.

[Current in Kiukiang, Kiangsi.]

夫有隔一隻手

哥有嫂有視如沒有

Elder brother has money, sister-in-law has money, but I myself have as good as nothing. Father has money, mother has money, but I myself do not attain to the possession of any. My husband has money, but none of it reaches his wife's hand.

[This is also from Kiukiang. It is supposed to advocate the economic independence of married women.]

時到我家鄉

利黃利黃

"Huang li huang, Huang li huang!" I wash clothes on the bank of the Yellow River. The water of the Yellow
River flows babbling by;—when shall I too return to my home?

["Huang li huang" is the name of the song. It was composed in the last year of Chia Ching of the Ming dynasty by Lu Jan of Hsün Hsien, Honan, and printed in the Mieh mēng chi, "Collection by a Small Fly." Although not now heard in the district, it is preserved in the literary encyclopædias.]

A small white hen flies up on to the pile of firewood. Without a mother, how can a child live? If I sleep with the cat, the cat will scratch me; if I sleep with the dog, the dog will bite me. I must take a young and beautiful step-mother to look after me.

[Current in Ch'ing-ho, Chihli, and Lin-ch'ing, Shantung. By "taking a step-mother," the younger indicates his wish for his father's re-marriage.]

A little mouse goes up on to the lamp-frame in order to eat the oil, but cannot get down again. If he had known that he could not get down, he would not have gone up. But, having gone up, he ought to come down again.

[This song which, like most of these ditties has several variations, is current in the same districts as the preceding
You are my younger brother; I am your elder brother: let us have a kettle of wine together. When we are drunk, we beat our wives; but, if they die from our beatings, how shall we get our living? If we have money, we will marry beautiful ones; if we are poor, we will marry ugly ones. Drink! drink a jug! Bring! bring a jag! Give a belch, and strike the gong!

[Current in Lin-ch’ing, this song is a hit at the dissipated habits of the Shantungese. The phrases 吃吃一鍋拉拉一鍋 taken together mean beginning another thing before finishing the previous one, here referring to the hypothetical re-marriages.]

Big feet [although] big [are good!] Big feet [although] big [are good!] On dark, rainy days they do not fear [being steady.] Big feet are good! Big feet are good! On dark, rainy days they do not stumble.

[This and the next are from the Wu-ch’ing district, Chihli. “Big” is used relatively to the size of the small cramped feet of women.]
Chinese Ditties.

The food, though made [only] of large white beans, is sweet. The girl has been cheaply reared: three catties of bean-curd and two ounces of wine [will buy her as a wife.] She is sent to the front door of her mother-in-law’s house. Her mother-in-law comes out, but objects to her big feet. Her future husband [lit., the son-in-law] [however] says: ‘Let her stay; she will dress her hair with oil and put a red flower in it. What do you want such dots of feet for?’ [The marital relation (‘in-law’) dates from the time of betrothal.]

The moon is very bright, and shines very white on all the threshing-floors. I take a stool and go out for an airing. The crisp pancake in the kitchen smells good. The fish and meat are both cheap [lit., the fish is cheap and the meat good (see note).] The hens’, geese’, and ducks’ eggs are home-laid, and with the vermicelli and vegetables there are altogether about ten kinds of eatables.

The moon is very bright. I put up an awning of matting. Under the awning there is a b’cock. On weighing him I see that he scales $2\frac{1}{2}$ catties. I will be able to sell him for 25 cents. With this I can buy a peck and a half of rice. My mother-in-law will eat one bowl and a half; but the wife
CHINESE DITTIES.

[1] will get only a grain and a half. Thus I endure hardships half the time [lit., from the first to the fifteenth of the month.]

[The price named would seem to indicate that the song belongs to thirty or more years ago. The ditty is a characteristic one in good style and alludes to the oppression of the people by their officials. 捲 for 浪; 掇 should be read 得; 煥 bright, here a localism; to make crisp by baking; 強 a localism for 廉價; to make the rhyme correct 生 should be 新.]

臭威自好何
你怎生不穿呢
莫有牙噹好
拿的莫兒呀

“Who is that outside the window?” “Old Chang.”
“Why don’t you come in?” “I am afraid of being bitten by the dog.” “Let me drive him away for you.” “Very good.”
“What have you in your hand?” “Dried dates.” “Why don’t you eat them?” “Because I have no teeth.” “I will fetch water for you to boil them in.” “Very good.”
“What is that over your shoulders?” “A worn-out fur jacket.” “Why do you not wear it.” “I am afraid of being bitten by the lice.” “Let me catch them for you.” “Very good.”

[Current in Wén Têng and Jung Hsien, Shantung. 射 for 誰; 起 for 給; 臭威自好 met. for 那很好; 莫兒 = 甚麼].

毛兒毛兒拉撚子

毛兒毛兒拉撚子

回頭看三板子

“Thieves! thieves! catch them!” Whoever looks round gets three slaps!

[毛兒 refers to the 長 毛 賊, or long-haired robbers (T'ai-p'ings). Têng Hsien formerly suffered from the attention of these rebels to such an extent that the mere mention of the word "robbers" caused fear in the hearts of the in-
CHINESE DITTIES.

habitants. Thus, in the reigns of Hsien Feng, T'ung Chih, and Kuang Hsu of the late Ch'ing dynasty groups of children when at play would join hands and sit down in a circle. One would walk round outside the circle singing this ditty, and anyone who turned round at the mention of the word received three slaps with a shoe.]

女
大
塲
房

木
大
作
倉

A tree, when full-grown, [is good for] use as a beam. A woman, when full-grown, is married [only] as a secondary wife.

[From Têng Hsien, Honan. In this district women are betrothed at an unusually early age (even for China), so that if a woman is late in getting engaged the husband probably has already married his first wife, and she becomes only his secondary wife or concubine. Trees should not be felled too soon, nor women married too late.]

俺
們
做
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好
莊
稼

行
路
君
子
莫
笑
話

媳
婦
後
邊
拾
土
拉

公
公
犁
地
婆
母
抜

白
老
鵝

黑
老
鵝

Black crows! white crows! While the father-in-law is ploughing, and the mother-in-law uprooting the weeds, the daughter-in-law follows behind picking out the hard lumps. You gentlemen travelling by, do not laugh at us. We are working for a good harvest!

[By the custom of the Têng Hsien district a father-in-law scarcely ever sees his daughter-in-law, but among the agriculturalists the field-work necessitates their meeting; hence this ditty. "White crows" are the "gentleman travellers," who are as little desired by the agriculturalists whilst engaged on their labours as the black ones.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

I wear black clothes and carry a rough basket. The rôle of a new wife is very hard to fill. When I measure the rice in the loft my husband’s mother is with me, and when I wash the rice in the river my mother-in-law is with me. When I draw water from the well my brother-in-law is with me, and when I cook in the kitchen my husband’s younger sister is with me. But still they say that I steal rice and send it to my parents. My parents are not really so poor as all that! Nine out of ten of their upstairs lattices are painted red. So I beg my elder brother, who is losing face [by this action of my parents-in-law] to take a message to those who drank my marriage wine [viz., the match-makers] [saying may it] break their intestines [and asking them] to keep my marriage purchase-money to pay priests to recite canons [over their corpses.]

[Current in Yü hang, Hang-chou Fu, Chêkiang.]

女壇

Divination, burning incense, weeping. Sons-in-law, grandsons, hens.

Current in Chêkiang. Indicates the chief “events” in the life of a woman in the olden days.]
Rats and mice! They both [come to eat] the sweet potatoes; when the sweet potatoes are all broken up they steal the eggs. The rats take the large eggs, the mice the small ones. Those they cannot hold in their two paws they roll away.

[Current in Fang Ling, Hupei. Refers to official oppression of the people.]

I was born first, my elder brother afterwards! At my mother’s wedding I beat the gong! I beat it until I reached her apartment in my maternal grandmother’s house. My grandmother was still in her cradle!

[From Huang Mei, Hupei. 招 = 招呼. In Kiangsu a kind of wooden bucket, shaped like a Chinese wash-basin, but double as deep, is used as a cradle. Straw is put in it for warmth, and by placing a brick under one corner it can be rocked. It is commonly called 窝 wo¹ or ou³, a nest, and is generally used in winter; in summer it is changed for a rock-basket, so as to get the benefit of the cool air. The 搖窝 mentioned in the song is probably identical with this. Compare the following, also from Kiangsu: 翁十三娘十四哥哥十五我十六, My father is 13, my mother 14, my elder brother 15, and I am 16!]
Chinese Ditties.

On the top of South Hill the grain-cart rolls along [easily down.] If there is a step-mother, then there is a step-father.
[From the Chiao Tung district, Shantung. Sung by sons and daughters. Refers to natural sequence, cruelty practised by a step-mother is also practised by a step-father.]

The child sleeps, covered by the dog-coverlet. The dog-coverlet has fleas, which bite the child to distraction.
[From Wen Teng and Jung Hsien, Shantung. Sung by mothers to lull their babies to sleep. A dog-coverlet is probably a bed-cover made of dog-skin. 革 should be 蓋. 得更＝抖撫, to rouse.]

Our heads freshly shaven, new couplets pasted [on the doors] we eat meat dumplings, and are older by another year!
[Same districts 汝支 = 餃子, eaten on New Year's eve.]
Sugared melon sacrificed to the God of the Stove—the New Year has arrived! The girls want flowers, the children fire-crackers, the old women want their feet [re-] bound, the old men felt caps.

[Same districts. The sacrifice named was performed on the 23rd day of the 12th moon (old style).]

—

God of Poverty! God of Poverty! What grudge have you against me? [And mine is] such a dark door [too!] Why do you not go and seek someone else? I feared that you would enter my door, and you have really done so. Since you entered my door, you follow me in everything I do and dog my steps, not leaving me [for an instant.] My relatives and friends take no notice of me, and when I am in trouble no one comes to enquire [fearing to be implicated.] (This is the song accusing the God of Poverty).

Sir! Sir! Being poor, you complain of your poverty. [But] why blame others? For one thing, you are too fond of eating; for another, too fond of drinking. Even if you were to have bestowed on you a gold lion, a silver unicorn, and a money-producing sow, they would be insufficient to meet your extravagances. (This is the song conveying the God of Poverty’s answer).

[From Kao I and Lin Ch’eng districts, Chihli.]
Re-marry! re-marry! and wear gold and silver! Marry a man! marry a man! and have clothes and food!

[Current in Huang An, Hsiao Huai, and other districts in Hupei. 嫁 = 酬, re-marriage of widows, which is still opposed to Chinese ideas of propriety.]

Sun screens, large fish-jars, pomegranate trees; blind musicians, fat dogs, stout maid servants.

[These are signs of respectability in the Manchu families of Peking.]

Little donkey, running so fast! A table; eight courses. Call Hsiao San to bring some wine. A cup for you, a cup for me! Thus we two become sworn brothers!

[Was popular about ten years ago in Chang Tê, Honan. At the present time friendships are still cemented over cups of wine at an "eight-dish dinner."
CHINESE DITTIES.

三个和尚水挨

两个和尚抬水喝

一个和尚挑水喝

One monk draws water to drink. Two monks carry water [in a jar] on a pole. Three monks can get no water to drink.

[Current in Wu Chiang, Kiangsu. 也 should be read as 也, alas! 没 read nasal p’ing shéng, in books commonly written 瞧. The allusion is to the pressure on the means of subsistence due to unemployment, whether of private individuals, priests, or officials.]

城隍菩萨慈悲跌倒

一跳跳到城隍庙

小官心裏要

蟋蟀嗤嗤叫

When the cricket is crying plaintively the children want to catch it. They dig up a stone, which rolls down until it reaches the temple of the City God and knocks him over!

[From Wu Chiang, Kiangsu. 蟋蟀 in the North 蟋蟀兒; 嘿 is the chirp it makes; 小官 = 兒童: 撲撲 should be read 僕僕; 慈 should be 擠. The idea is that the children get poisoned by the beetles and the parents blame the god!]

没见花叶只见茎

有朝一日狂风吹

花有红白叶是青

The artemisia grows on its long stalk. Its flowers are white and red and its leaves green. One day a gale springs up; its flowers and leaves are torn off, and only its stalk remains.

[From Huang Pei in Hupeii.]
The great stars in the sky are not evenly distributed. A young wife finds life hard. When she grinds a pint of wheat [and produces only] three pints [of grain] her father-in-law curses her and her mother-in-law beats her. Moreover, they say that she steals the meal to give to other people. So she cuts off her black hair and hangs herself with it. She does not desire to be adorned with gold nor buried with silver; but she will leave a good name for endless ages.

[Current in Huang Kang, Hupei.]

A small bench! An earthen terrace! I have married a good-for-nothing! He loves drinking and gambling, and does not return home till the third watch of the night. A pint or so of rice, a bundle or so of firewood—on these I cannot subsist.

[From Yünnan Fu.]

When the floods covered Peking city the clam-shells went up on to the k'ang.

[In the reign of Tao Kuang this ditty was sung in Peking. k'ang is used for 烟. At that time, the opium-pipe was introduced, and large numbers of people lay on their k'ang smoking opium. Of the large number of accessories many were made of the shells of bivalves; hence the allusion to clam-shells.]
[At the time when] the two top-knots [of earlier times expanded into] the large wings widespread, and the figure 10 on the [earlier] coins in the reign of Kuang Hsü was changed [into the larger form], the foreign devils become a little weaker.

[Current in Peking in the 24th and 25th years (1898-9) of the reign of Kuang Hsü. 兩把頭大拉翅 refers to the changed head-dress of Manchu women. The use of this head-dress is of early date, but formerly it was small and made of their own hair in the shape of two top-knots tied together. Later it became larger, was more generally made of false hair, and assumed the shape of two wings, one on each side of the head. The change on the coins was due to the dislike, during a period of strong anti-foreign feeling, to the resemblance of the Chinese character for ten to the Christian cross, and it was accordingly changed from 十 to the larger form 拾。]

Dig up the rails, pull up the telegraph poles, and see whether the foreigners won't be in difficulties!

[From the Sha Ho and Yung Nien districts, Chihli. Both this and the last originated in the same anti-foreign sentiment,—this in Boxer, the former in pre-Boxer times.]
The fatal preserve: the life-giving mince-pies.

[From Lung-p'ing Hsien, Chihli. 糖果 in the North are called 糕, 糕 are pastry containing mincemeat. By the custom of that hsiün 糕 are used in sacrificing to the Kitchen God. At that time (23rd day of the 12th moon) dunners for overdue debts begin to appear, so the 糕 are termed “fatal.” But on the 1st moon 糕 are eaten, and being associated with a happier time when dunners can come no longer are termed “life-giving.” The adjectives are supposed to be used by the debtors themselves.]

A queue three feet long, a man five feet high:—a fully-grown married man!

[Also from Lung-p'ing. Refers to the very early age of marriage in that district. When married a man, though very young, is already known as an adult, but is not considered as such before marriage; even if he remain a generation unmarried he is still looked upon as an infant!]
CHINESE DITTIEST.

A red cock with a green tail! If the status is equal they [the man and maid]; may be married. When a man is grown up he should marry a wife; when a girl reaches womanhood she should have a husband. The girl’s family should not look to the husband’s status; the husband’s family should not reckon on the wife’s dowry. If the husband is a scholar and the wife can manage her household it will be a good match and they will have fine children!

[From Hsi-ch‘ung Hsien, Ssüch’uan. A red cock with a green tail is a very fine looking bird (a fine man); though perhaps the green tail indicates the wife!]

三個媳婦
兩個婦女
一個家主

兩個媳婦
幾個婦女
到過

With one daughter-in-law the family may be tranquil; with two daughters-in-law quarrels will take place; but with three daughters-in-law the family will be broken up.

[From Nan-chang Hsien, Hupei. Indicates the improbability of harmony between the wife and an increasing number of daughters-in-law. 務 and 宿 are interchangeable sounds.

除非除了張書農
要得南漳不窮

除非除了董聘三
要得南漳安

If we desire to make Nan-chang safe, we must kill Tung P’in-san; if we desire to make Nan-chang rich, we must drive Chang Shu-nung away.

[Tung, at the end of the Ch’ing dynasty, was Collector of Education Fees, by appropriating which he made himself and his family rich, so the people of Nan-chang hated him to his very bones. In the 年 (1671), when the 革命 revolutionaries arose, he was killed by the people of his own village, who cast his corpse into the mountain stream. Chang
also was a corrupt member of the gentry class and a man of capital, which he loaned to merchants at great profit. He constantly resorted to litigation to enforce his claims, so also was hated by his own villagers. This is a good type of the more modern style of ditties.]

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**WU KAI**

Nan-chang! Nan-chang! It is the best place in Chingshiaang. To the East is the native place of Hsü Shü; to the West there is the village of Shui Ching.

[Nan-chang is to the west of Hsiang-yang, a *fu* in the An-Hsiang-Yün-Ching circuit, Hupei, and known in the Ch'in dynasty as 襄 . Hsiang-yang is a very productive district, 800 li in area, and an important place on the road to Ssüeh-nan and Shansi. 水鏡 or 水鏡先生 is the style (taken from the name of the village) of Ssü-ma Hui whose other style was Tê-ts'ao. Both he and Hsü Shü lived in the time of the Three Kingdoms (A.D 220-65.) About two *li* to the east of Nan-chang is Hsü Shü's hall of ancestors, marking the site of his native village. To the west is the village of Shui Ching, which was Ssü-ma Hui's favourite resort for walking and fishing, and now noted for its historical associations and fine scenery.]

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When a man has a few acres of agricultural land, he [being purse-proud] is fond of litigation. But the day comes when a catastrophe happens [he meets one more powerful than he], and he has to sell all his property and is put in prison.

[Also from Nan-chang. 有之一日 generally = 有朝一日.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

年成不好樹皮也呑得
年成好嫌穀黑

When the harvest is good we grumble at the wheat being black; but when the harvest is bad we even eat bark.

[In the Chang district droughts are frequent. In the worst times, the bark of the elm tree is ground up, boiled, and eaten to stay hunger. The ditty preaches contentment and economy: if all classes economized, there would be no scarcity and no complaints.]

清末無青草
明末無白丁

At the end of the Ming dynasty there was no green grass; at the end of the Ch'ing dynasty there were no ignorant people.

[From Feng-t'ien Fu. According to the Chinese saying, in the Ming dynasty the people suffered from heaven's fault, not from their own; in the Ch'ing, from their own, namely, allowing bad officials to be employed in the government of the country. "No green grass"—very much impoverished. "No ignorant people" means that members of even the lower classes could be appointed officials and so belong to the "scholar" class.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

The Mongols trouble the Chinese; the Chinese trouble the Mongols. The Mongols and Chinese have troubled each other for two hundred years [lit., autumns.]

[Also from Feng-t'ien. The reference is to the chronic animosity between the North and the South. How this idea obsessed the native mind was illustrated in the reign of Ch'ien Lung. As that monarch was going through the Tung-chih Men of Peking on his way to Jehol, the wind blew his hat off. As the wind blew from the north, it was taken as an omen of trouble from the Mongols, the prediction being fulfilled in the person of Chang Ko Erh, the Mongol Prince who rebelled against China during his reign. After peace had been arranged, Chang came to Peking to being tribute, but was tracheroously murdered by the Chinese—an act which led to further Mongol revolutions and wars.]

春打六九頭

窮漢子就翻手

黃牛遍地走

九九加一九

八九雁來

七九河開

春打六九頭

The Spring [sacrifice is] at the beginning of the sixth nine. At the seventh nine the river opens. At the eighth nine the wild goose comes. At the ninth nine plus one nine the yellow ox everywhere ploughs [lit, walks] the fields, and the poor han tzü [native, Chinese] can then make a living.

[From Feng-t'ien, but varies in different parts. From the winter solstice (11th day of 11th moon) to the beginning of spring (generally the 26th day of 12th moon) is 45 days (five nines), the spring sacrifice being on the first day of the sixth nine, i.e., on the 46th day after the winter solstice. The seventh and eighth nines are 63 and 72 days respectively after the winter solstice, the ninth nine plus one nine being 90 days after that epoch. 翻手 lit., to turn (use) his hands.]

初一叩頭

二十八把頂發

三九祭神

二十六化豬肉

二十八日年菜

二十七宰年豬

小娃娃你別髒

過了臘八就是年

二十三灶王爺上天

春打六九頭
CHINESE DITTIES.

Little baby, don't be greedy! After the 8th day of the 12th moon the [new] year [will soon be] here. On the 23rd the Stove God goes up to heaven; on the 24th we write [New Year] couplets. On the 25th we make bean-curd. On the 26th we melt pork. On the 27th we kill the year-fowl for sacrifice. On the 28th we raise [with yeast, i.e., make ready to be eaten] the vermicelli. On the 29th we paste [new paper round] the rice-measure. On the eve of the 30th we worship the gods. On the first [day of the New Year] we k'ou-t'ou [kowtow: offer New Year congratulations.]

[Fêng-t'ien in winter is a very cold land, where pork freezes as soon as killed and has to be thawed before use. This is done by heating over a fire or by soaking in hot water. In poor villages, bean-curd is not usually eaten except at the New Year, for the sake of economy. Pork is bought before the 23rd day because it is then cheaper, and is kept in cold storage until the 26th. 燕斗 is a rice-measure made of bamboo splints and pasted on the outside with paper. It is filled with rice, in which incense sticks are stuck. The rectangular ones are called 斗, the round ones 爐.]

[Calabash flower! making the whole street white! I weep [wondering] when my husband will come [return.] Tiles on the roof, bricks on the ground; [but I am] a perpetual widow at [only] seventeen or eighteen years of age!]

[Current among young people in Shên-tsê Hsien, Chihli. Tiles and bricks are complementary to the roof and ground respectively; similarly a husband should not be without a wife nor a wife without a husband. "The whole street white" conveys the idea of uniformity and completeness, which should also be the case in married life, but the young widow, having no husband, is by contrast incomplete.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

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Where there is an unmarried woman [in the family] do not have a vegetable garden; where there are young boys do not carry a wheat-cake basket on your arm!

[Same district. The first sentence implies trouble from the young men who come to buy vegetables and may flirt with the girl; the second refers to wheat-cake selling being a poor business and the sellers notorious liars and cheats, so that it is to be feared the boys will follow in their father's footsteps.

挺 more correctly 挺 .]

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So! so! baby is going to sleep! While she sleeps grandma will go to the field to cut some ears of corn. When she has cut a basketful she will beat out as much as half a pint [of grain]—enough to enable you ladies to pass the winter.

[Current in Honan. This is sung by the grandmother as she lulls the baby to sleep, the mother being engaged on other business. The half-pint of grain is of course a daily supply. "You ladies" are the mother and the baby. 够 should be written 矩 .]

小白

鸡

穀

读

水

小

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嘴

小

近

嘴

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說

割

場

場

肉

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43
CHINESE DITTIES.

['Grandmama says:] 'Small white chicken [clucking like] the sound of bubbling water!' [I say:] 'Grandmama, you kill the crane; I will hold its legs.' I say [further:] 'Cut some top-knot meat for me to eat.' Grandmama says: 'Little glutton!' ”

Also from Honan, 火鐘 onomatopoeic, sound of boiling water. 拉 = 拉. The chattering child is compared to a clucking chicken. The crane is a household pet, not to be killed. Its top-knot is said to be poisonous, on account of its feeding on scorpions, snakes, etc. The crane is usually found only in the homes of wealthy families. Young girls’ foreheads (sometimes their ears or arms) are stained with blood taken from the top-knot. This is done at five or six years of age, and if it remains it is regarded as a proof of virginity (known as 守宮砂).]

小生上學堂

Little scholar! going to school to learn poetry and study literature! When the red banner floats over our door see if we shan’t be distingué!

[From Honan. If a member of a family passed the Palace Examination (under the old system) and became a 状元, Optimus, a red banner was displayed at the street door and glory was reflected upon the whole district. 排塲 = 榮耀. The old name for 紅旗 was 錦標.]

拍豆莢上南坡

Crack the bean-shells [and rake the shells] on to South Hill. Go and reap the crops on the south side of South Hill. One acre yields two bushels. First use the coarse sieve to
sift the black wheat flour; then the fine one to sift the white wheat flour. The manager eats [the cakes]; the labourers look on! Truly this agricultural business is hard to manage [the lot of us labourers is hard.]

[Also from Honan. 夠契 is “especially fine.” 夠契 is better than 夠契 the usual character in colloquial expressions.]

At this Spring-time in the New Year [we, the singers, wish you, the lord or master,] great riches. May the gold “shoes’” roll in! With the large ones you can buy real property; with the small ones you can open a business! May the “shoes’” roll as far as your hen roosts and you have rice measures full of eggs! May they roll up to your lofts and your storerooms be full of husked and unhusked grain! May they roll to your pigsties and you rear pigs as big as oxen. [yielding] 70 catties of fat and with heads 80 catties in weight! As the fat dissolves in the large iron pan, hissing and spluttering, may the year make you rich as quickly as the oil melts!

[Current in Wu, Lü, and other districts of E. Chêkiang. 此此 抗烹 is the sound of oil frying. Sung as a New Year carol by children to get cakes and dumplings.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

[Dates from the reign of Kuang Hsii of the Ch'ing dynasty; prevalent in Feng-t'ien Province, in Hai-Ch'eng, Ying-k'ou, and other hsien. The four classes mentioned were those especially dreaded by the people.]

各尋各在那裡

哇哇哭要奶吃

賣了婆娘受孤寂

不賣婆娘肚子餓

賭博的光棍賣婆娘

張大水漫城塹

The great flood overflows the city wall. The gambling vagabonds sell their wives. If they do not sell their wives their stomachs will be an-hungered. If they do sell them they are then solitary and sad. The babies cry, wanting milk to drink. Each party seeks the other, but where are they [to be found?]

[From Sui Hsien, Hupei. Wives are commonly called 婆娘. 哇哇 should be 娃娃 to make the sense consistent.]

尖嘴老賣燈草

回到河邊狗子咬

賣到河邊狗子咬

與爹說

與爹說

媽說還要咬

婆娘拿棍趕出來

說看你那裡跑

Old Pointed-mouth! selling lamp-wicks! In selling them he goes as far as the river-bank, where the dogs bark at him. When he returns home the chickens peck him and the dogs claw him. He tells his father. His father says: "It were better for them not to bite you." He tells his mother. His mother says: "They will probably bite you again!" His wife and his sister-in-law take sticks and drive him out, saying: "We'll see where you'll run to!"

[From Hsieh-ma Ho, Pao-kiang Hsien, Hupei. An example of want of sympathy shown to the poor in China.]
When one's luck is bad, the devil turns the corn-mill, and the yellow marmot climbs up and sits on the hen-coop.

[From Pao-k'ang, Hupei. Refers to the ruin of families in that district from war and looting. There being no one in the house the devil does not fear to enter, and the marmot sits on the top of the empty hen-coop instead of going inside it, as it would if it contained something for it to steal.]

When one is unmarried, one longs to be married; when one is married, one repents.

[From Wên Chou, Chêkiang.]

The heavy rain comes pattering down. Corn, rice, and tea rise in price. The children want their porridge; husband and wife quarrel.

[From Fêng T'ien. In that province, in the 7th and 8th moons, the price of rice, etc., depends upon the rainfall. Cf. 窮吵競囂 (discord) 柴米夫妻 (harmony). 化化 is the onomatopoeic sound of heavy rain. It has here the fourth tone, but in Peking 花花 in the first tone is used.]
Chinese Ditties.

Little grasshopper! chirping away! We, mother and child, are worried with our troubles. [But] we must endure them until your father comes, [when we] will have steamed cakes and dumplings to eat [lit., steam cakes and eat dumplings.]

[From Chi Hsien, Chihli. The husband has gone out to trade; the mother leads the child to the field where she works, and sings this ditty to comfort herself and enjoin patience until the father returns with the food. 蒸窯 are made of maize; 荪糕 contain beans and dates, or if plain are eaten with sugar. 耐 = 忍耐. ‘Little grasshopper’ refers to the restless child.]

Piece of granite! clinking ting-tang! My father sold me without consulting me. The money he acquired by selling me paid off his debts and was not appropriated for buying anything for my dowry.

[The first six characters are an introductory humming, referring to the father’s hard nature 賠坊, to complete the house, by providing the newly-wedded wife, according to custom, with the service of waiting-maids, etc. 陪房 should be 房陪房 is the same expression as 陪嫁 in the South. 坊 originally 棋, read by some 方, which is very close to the southern sound of 房. This and the two following ditties are from S.E. Shansi.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

公婆憎的不言喻
不等锅煎就打扮
娘家呼心喜欢
婆娑把面倒安

A charcoal shovel curved the wrong way is useless. When her mother invited her she was so glad that, without waiting till the pot boiled, she dressed herself, and only when quite ready did she ask her parents-in-law’s permission so that they were speechless with anger [lit., speechless and panting.]

[The introductory sentence, indicating the uselessness of a convex shovel, alludes to the incompatibility of the wife in her parents-in-law’s home.]

白菜撲地葉葉黃
人家的娃娃嘐嘐叫他
人家的大嘐嘐大
人家的爺爺奶奶
人家的腳地踏掃白
小着吃親娘奶

Cabbage leaves dropped on the ground become yellow. It was unfortunate that my mother gave birth to me. When I was a baby she nursed me. When I grew up I waited on my parents-in-law. I swept their floors clean, and poured libations in the halls of their ancestors. I even called my husband’s father papa and his mother mama, [but was only allowed to] call their baby “he!”

[The introductory sentence alludes to the dislike for or ill-treatment of daughters-in-law by their parents-in-law. The daughter-in-law in the present case contrasts the treatment received by her from her own mother and her parents-in-law respectively in spite of her filial conduct to the latter and loyalty to her husband. Though she used respectful forms of address to them she was not even allowed to address their child as an equal. 嘐 has the local sound 萬 ning; Manchus and Mongols say tsa-mo. 大 has here the meaning 父, father.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

미

It is dawn! The cock has crowed. The ox has whisked his tail. The girls and boys must all get up. When the boys get up they collect dung; when the girls get up they weave tassels.

[From An P’ing, Chihli. Enjoins early rising. 莫 is probably dung for fuel. The ox whisks his tail as a sign that he is going to start work.]

If you desire [to collect] many, shift slowly. If you desire only a few, run all over the hill.

[Motto: festina lente. Sung by youngsters when picking flowers, fruit, herbs, etc., on the hills. From Chao-yüan, P’eng-lai, Huang Hsien, and other places in Shantung.]

The year is again nearing its end, and my heart throbs sadly. I have no means to meet the expenses at the end of the year, being quite “broke.” In the city [lit., street] there is no arranger of credit for buying cloth for making clothes; in my native village there is no money-lender. My sisters have money, but refuse to lend it; my brothers and friends disdain
me for my extreme poverty. I raise my glass and take a drink of wine. [As these painful] thoughts [become intolerable I lift my] eyes, and the tears streaming down my face [show the] sadness [of my heart.]

[From Wên-ch’ang Hsien, Shantung.]

春雨縵綿不肯晴

The incessant Spring rain refuses to lift. What a pity that this fine season should be wasted! The oriole utters maledictions, yet without effect. There is nothing for it but for the young girls to cut out a paper man, paper broom and dust-basket, and a paper “cloud-ladder.” With blood from their fingers they colour the lips and eyebrows, and binding [the paper figures] onto a pole [hang them out of the window.] [But all that happens is that] they all get their little red clothes saturated; thus showing that the rain cannot be stopped by this means; and all laugh at A-nung for her simplicity!

[From the rainy districts of Southern Kuangtung. A-nung is used as a generic term for young girls. The oriole usually pipes cheerfully, but the rain damps even his high spirits.]

The door is important; fire is important; in the bringing-up of girls their feet are important.

[This and the following eleven are from the Chao-yüan district of Shantung. Care of the door is important on account of thieves, of fire for fear of destruction, and the size of girls’ feet, because they should be brought up decently and not be “gadders”: one of the reasons alleged for the practice of compressing women’s feet.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

At the top of South Hill there is a blade of grass. A man should not have two wives. If he has several they only fight. And when they have started fighting they make a ridiculous hubbub. But if I think of beating my principal wife, she has been too many years in my home; and if I think of beating my concubine, she makes herself so charming to me with her paint and powder. If I beat both wife and concubine, all the children of the house will make an uproar. But if both wife and concubine are not beaten, the neighbours opposite and on each side will deride me [for not being able to manage my females.]

[The introductory phrase refers to one man, the husband, as contrasted with the relatively large number of wife and concubines.]

When the wife in a rich family dies, it [re-marriage] is as easy as changing one's linen; when the wife in a poor family dies, it is as if the ladder of heaven had fallen down.

[ 勸 should be 權，權當＝當作＝如同。If the ladder of heaven has fallen down mounting thereto is difficult.]
A girl should not be married to a student; day and night she will live alone. Even if he should reach some lofty position he will only come back with a concubine.

[This and the preceding ditty refer to the low estimation in which women were held by the Chinese.]

貴人吃貴物

Fine people eat fine things; the descendants of the rustic eat bean-curd.

[Bean-curd, in villages, is a cheap food. 孫 is difficult to explain; perhaps it is used with a derisory meaning such as 犛蟆!]

無錢的君子受龍的氣

A moneyed bastard sits in the stalls; but a poor gentleman suffers the bastard’s scorn.

[龍 is the freshwater turtle; here used for 忘八 or 王八 turtle (’s egg)= bastard.]

當了婆婆會弄聲兒

If it is bowl [for rice] it must be bigger than a wine-cup; [similarly] when a man is a priest he is naturally able to recite prayers; [so also] when a woman is a wife she cannot but cause a noise.
CHINESE DITTIES.

[The meaning of 大其盅 is obscure. 容 is a covered cup for wine. The noise referred to is caused by the husband's mother teaching her daughter-in-law her duties.]

三輩不念書

待要出大駱

必定出個駱

還得念書

If for three generations [a family] does not study it will certainly produce a donkey; but even if it produce a big donkey it is still necessary for it to study.

[駱 or 駱 here read lu to rhyme. A small donkey, sc. stupid son, is useless; even a big donkey is insufficiently useful from the intellectual point of view.]

能吃能幹

能吃不能幹

真是好漢

是個八蛋

If able to eat and manage his business he is really a good man; if able to eat but unable to manage his business he is a bastard!

["Able to eat" means to eat much, and so, according to Chinese ideas, have much strength and consequently ability to make money!]

七天一個禮拜日

門口掛上五色旗

先學鬼子叫

後學駱駝蹄

In every seven days there is one Sunday. [On that day] we hang the five-coloured flag out over the door. First we learn the foreign devil's noise, and afterwards [to wear] the donkey's raised hoofs.

[A hit at Western learning and fashions. "Noise" means language. A donkey is stupid and his hoofs, at the instep, are like the "foreign devil's" boots, not level with the ground like the sole of the Chinese shoe.]
Chinese Ditties.

The graduate enters the temple of the Sage. When Confucius sees him he laughs “Ha! Ha!” Yen Yüan stares. Tzü Lu says: “I will drive him away . . .”

[The ending is neither dignified, classical, nor worthy of one of the principal disciples of Confucius, and is best left untranslated, but the tyro in Chinese translation (for whom these annotations are chiefly intended) must be warned against rendering the 尿 as coming from Tzü Lu. The following version is less objectionable.]

The graduate enters the temple of the Sage. When Confucius sees him he laughs “Ha! Ha! I can easily tell where you graduated!” Yen Yüan stares. Tzü Lu “lets out” with his foot and kicks him out of the temple, [saying:] “Really you are without any sense of shame!”

[Another version of the preceding ditty.]

When Hsüan T'ung returned to the throne the baldheads were to be beheaded. When Hsüan T'ung took to his heels the baldheads recovered.

[“Baldheads”: those who had cut off their queues on the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty.]
CHINESE DITTIES.

Drinking soup or water cannot bring strength; eating fish or meat make one "pot-bellied."

[Current in Wu Hsi, Kiangsu. 稻床 is an agricultural implement, used in South China, which bulges in its lower part. 喝 in the south and west has approximately the sound of 哈.]

“A sedan-chair is coming! A sedan-chair is coming!”

“Behold! a coffin!”

[Also from Wu Hsi. The streets in the towns of that district are narrow and the passengers crowded together. Those who travel by sedan-chair are more numerous than in most other places. The bearer in front has to keep on calling out: “A sedan-chair is coming!” to get the foot-passengers to let it pass. The latter resent this and retaliate by calling the sedan-chair a coffin, for which people must always give way. 子 is to be read here as 則, the sound given to it colloquially.]